

Further, independent claims 28 and 35, describing each a surgical method, have been amended in order to clarify and emphasize that the initially detached jaw(s) is/are introduced into the body cavity (abdomen/thorax) through a suitable opening ("hole") created on patient's intact body wall. A next step requiring attachment of the detached jaw, is being done (by snap-coupling) inside the body cavity (by another commercially available surgical tool such as a laparoscopic grasper).

Furthermore, independent claim 35 has also been amended in order to clarify and emphasize the originality of the surgical method described in. By that method, the **flexible tubular body** of the **annular stapler, virgin of his two jaws** is inserted into the body cavity (abdomen/thorax) through a "classic" trocar port [of weak nominal diameter (<10mm)] for laparoscopic surgery. The jaws are in a next step, snap-fitted to it (-as said above-) **inside** the body cavity.

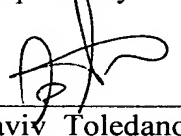
Amended independent claims 28 and 35 now feature language which makes it absolutely clear that the methods of the present specification are novel and inventive and not anticipated by KURAMOTO et al. (US 5,395,030) as stated on the International Preliminary Examination Report (PCT/IB 97/00887) mailed 06 Jan.99

Support for the amendments can be found in the specification. Specifically, support for the amendments of independent claim 28 can be found in the specification in Fig. 13 and on page 26, line 11 – page 27, line 7.

Support for the amendments of claim 35 can be found in the specification in Fig. 16 and on page 30, line 10 – page 31, line 12.

In view of the above amendments and remarks it is respectfully submitted that this specification is in condition for allowance.

Respectfully Submitted,


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27. The method of claim 23, wherein at least one additional surgical operation is performed between steps (a) and (d).
28. A method for joining two parts of hollow organs over an annular area defined on a plane in each of said two organs or segments, under conditions of closed surgery on a patient, the method comprising the steps of-
- (a) providing a flexible annular stapler having a flexible body, two round jaws and a flexible cable sliceable through said body and through a first one of said jaws and having an end protrudable from said first jaw, said second one of said jaws being attachable to said end of said cable, said second jaw being initially detached;
 - (b) inserting said first one of said jaws into a first one of the two parts of hollow organs, advancing said first jaw to where it is inside the first part near the respective plane and causing said end of said cable to protrude from said first part;
 - (c) introducing said second jaw into a body cavity through the patient's body wall and attaching it in the inside of said body cavity to said end of said cable;
 - (d) having said second jaw inside the second one of the two parts of hollow organs and having each of the two parts form an at least partially closed butt at or near the respective plane, said butt enclosing the respective one of said jaws; and
 - (e) operating said annular stapler so as to pull said two butts together, to staple the two organs or segments to each other over the annular areas and to cut away portions of said butts that are central to the annular area.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein said inserting is effected through a natural opening of the patient's body.

31. The method of claim 28, wherein at least one of the two parts of hollow organs has an opening through its respective plane essentially inside the respective annular area, the method further comprising, for each of the two parts, the step of shrinking the opening so as to form an at least partially closed butt.

32. The method of claim 31, wherein said shrinking includes, with respect to each of the two parts, pressing the tissue surrounding the opening to form a pair of adjoining lips and stapling said lips together by means of a linear stapler.

33. The method of claim 28, further comprising, prior to step (c), the step of causing said end of said cable to protrude into the second one of the two parts of hollow organs.

34. The method of claim 28, wherein at least one surgical operation is performed between steps (a) and (e).

35. A method for joining two parts of hollow organs over an annular area defined on a plane in each of the two parts, under conditions of closed surgery performed on a patient, the method comprising the steps of –

- (a) providing a flexible annular stapler having a flexible body, two round jaws and a flexible cable slidable through said body and through a first one of said jaws and having an end protrudable from said first jaw, the first one of said jaws being attachable to said body and the second one of said jaws being attachable to said end of said cable, both of said jaws being initially detached;
- (b) inserting said flexible body through a suitable trocar port in the patient's body wall;
- (c) introducing said first jaw into a body cavity through the patient's body wall and attaching it in the inside of said body cavity to said flexible body;
- (d) introducing said second jaw into a body cavity through the patient's body wall and attaching it in the inside of said body cavity to said end of said cable;
- (e) having said first jaw inside the first one, and said second jaw inside the second one, of the two parts of hollow organs and having each of the two parts form an at least partially closed butt at or near the respective plane, said butt enclosing the respective one of said jaws; and
- (f) operating said annular stapler so as to pull said two butts together, to staple the two organs or segments to each other over an annular area and to cut away portions of said butts that are central to said annular area.

36. The method of claim 35, wherein at least one of the two parts of hollow organs has an opening through its respective plane essentially inside the respective annular area, the method

further comprising, for each part having an opening, the step of shrinking the opening so as to form an at least partially closed butt.

37. The method of claim 36, wherein said shrinking includes pressing the tissue surrounding the opening to form a pair of adjoining lips and stapling said lips together by means of a linear stapler.

38. The method of claim 35, further comprising, prior to step (c), the step of having said flexible body protrude into one of the two parts.

39. The method of claim 35, further comprising, prior to step (d), the step of having said end of said cable protrude into one of the two parts.

40. The method of claim 35, wherein at least one surgical operation is performed between steps (a) and (f).